

THE MORALIST.

— *Spes discite vestras.*—VIRGIL.

Auspicious hope, in thy sweet garden grow,
Wreathes for each toil, a charm for every woe.
CAMPBELL.

No. 3.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 1814.

I was last evening engaged in reading a book on the subject of reveries and anticipations, as certain idle fancies are called, which are usually in an inverse proportion to the rational prospects of those who indulge them. Persons who are little engaged in active business, are most prone to these foolish whimsies—hence, they chiefly infect the brains of students, and women, more usually fall into them than men.

Those who by their own powers of body or mind, feel competent to make or mend their fortunes, go about it in serious earnest and a rational manner; while those, who can do little or nothing to better their situation, sit themselves down and imagine that some lucky accident is coming to their aid. But these vagaries, more or less, infect the brains of all mankind; and if some of our gravest Statesmen and most serious Divines, would take

their pens, and acquaint the world with the idle reveries which have occupied many an hour, they would afford the reader a vast deal of merriment.

Reverie is a very charming amusement, as all will bear me witness who have indulged it; but at the same time I apprehend that it is pernicious, especially to the young. It weakens the powers of judgment, by giving too much sway to the fancy, thus rendering the mind visionary; it also causes a great waste of time, and unfits a person for serious business or study. It not unfrequently sours our tempers towards the world, and discontents us with our own fortunes; for we are very apt to expect what we suffer ourselves to imagine. I shall hereafter treat this subject in a serious manner; but as the book I had been reading, and my reflections upon it, took so deep a hold on my mind that it haunted my sleep, I shall give my readers, in the present number, a faithful picture of the ludicrous fancies to which it gave rise.

I imagined that I was walking on the Battery, enjoying the shade and the cool breeze, when I discovered a great crowd near the Flag-staff, and two women very busy in holding up a couple of mirrors to such as wished to look in them. I enquired of a person who had just come from thence, and was informed that they were fortune-tellers or witches; and that their names were Anticipation and Experi-

ence. Anticipation showed them in a mirror, the events of the future; while Experience, in the same manner, unfolded the past.

I drew near and found that all eagerly looked first in the mirror of Anticipation, and that very few cared afterwards to look in the glass of Experience, except the incredulous, who applied to her for proof, that she and her companion were true fortune-tellers and not imposters. Anticipation, as I soon discovered, invariably consulted the wishes of those who addressed her, or to explain the matter more philosophically, her glass gave back the very images of their own imaginations. I obtained a position where I could overlook the shoulders of those who came to behold their lives in the respective mirrors.

A lady quite celebrated in the beau-monde, who has been of the ripe age of twenty-four for these five years past, and will probably be no older for five years to come, after putting six-pence in the hand of Anticipation, and adjusting her ringlets, assumed a most bewitching smile and looked in the glass. The mirror flattered my friend extremely; she seemed much handsomer than usual, and I saw her appear in great brilliancy, successively at the Theatre, the Assembly and the Party, where a crowd of young men, from the age of twenty-five to forty, were all solicitously paying her their court.

On some she smiled, to others she gave a tap of her fan, and others she honored with a repartee, at which they never failed to break out one and all into a roar of laughter. From time to time each one, as he found his opportunity, made the most passionate declarations of a tender attachment. She heard them all with a very gracious air, and a look of compassion—on such occasions there was never a cruel line to be seen in her countenance. She assured them, one after another, that altho' they possessed her esteem, and altho' she was infinitely obliged to them for such honorable sentiments, she must entreat of them to think of her no more; for she could never give her hand where she could not bestow her heart. I confess I was surprised at this conduct of my friend, who to my certain knowledge never had but one offer in her life, and this she had actually resolved to accept, when the young man who made it, unfortunately discontinued his visits.

At length a very elegant man about forty years of age, who had long paid his court at a distance, requested a private interview; and I soon discovered from the blushes which stole over her face, from a sort of pensiveness in her manner, and the love, which in spite of her endeavors to conceal it, sparkled in her blue eyes, that he was the hero of her little romance. He made his declaration in strains

of the most pathetic eloquence, and threw himself at her feet in the finest style of novels. The lady blushed a deeper red, hesitated, faltered, and at length, in a prettily rounded sentence, gotten by heart from Miss Radcliff, confessed the gentle flame of reciprocal love.

From their subsequent conversation I discovered that the gentleman was a member of Congress, besides being a Colonel of militia, and I was not surprised, for I had always suspected my friend of being ambitious.

I shall not tell my readers all that followed, for I would be the last of men to unveil to the public eye the sacred mysteries of love, and to drag from their retreat in some sly corner, the kiss, the sigh, the soft pressure of the hand, and those delicate protestations in which romances so much abound, and which the fortune-teller on this occasion so liberally promised.

The lady, whose joy was excessive, could hardly believe what she saw, and turned round to look in the other mirror for confirmation. As I have already given my readers a hint of what was to be expected, I shall not trouble them with a detail of the disclosures made in the glass of Experience. Suffice it to say, that the picture was of a very different

character from the first, and fully convinced her that the fortune-tellers were *real fortune-tellers*, and no imposters and she went away highly delighted, throwing up her large blue eyes with a more languishing air than any described in history.

The next who came forward was a young gentleman whom I often meet in Broadway, and who having delivered a graduate exercise on leaving Columbia College, for which he was very much praised by his uncles and aunts, has ever since been somewhat vain. He put six-pence in the hands of Anticipation, and perceiving me, nodded and smiled, without observing that I was in a situation to overlook him and read his fortune.

He beheld himself at an age when his beard scarcely wanted pruning, a member of Congress; and my readers would be thunder-struck were they to hear the speeches which he made in that august assembly. The galleries were crowded with admiring spectators, and the doors thronged with multitudes unable to gain admittance, some of whom offered a hundred dollars for a seat. The flights of his imagination were sublime, and the torture of his satire so terrible, that one of his opponents fainted under it. His speeches were struck off in handbills, and disseminated thro' the country with as much speed as the President's message. He was

received with huzzas as he came from the house, and carried on the shoulders of the multitude to his lodgings. All this and more was represented in the witch's mirror, in a manner as much superior to the Camera Obscura, as that wonderful exhibition is to ordinary painting.

From the Senate the young hero saw himself called to the field. Fifty thousand men were poured by the British into the southern states and arms put into the hands of the negroes. I shall spare the delicate nerves of the ladies the atrocities and barbarities of this bloody war; and bloody it was beyond example. The channel of a brook, dried up by the parching heat of the sun, was completely full of blood, which guggled over rocks and pebbles and pitching from a precipice formed a most horrible frothing and ruddy cataract. Our young gentleman was ever in the hottest of the battle, minding bullets no more than hail stones, and from the rank of Colonel soon rose, by merit alone, to the supreme command,

From this moment affairs wore a different aspect, nor was he less successful by his eloquence than by his arms. He rode out in front of a negro battalion in the most valorous manner, and made an oration in which he spoke so super-humanly that they threw down their arms and craved pardon at

his feet. The speeches which he made to his own troops on the eve of engagements, were innumerable, and exceeded the finest specimens of similar speeches recorded by Xenophon, Thucydides, and Tacitus. At length the negroes returned to their duty and the hostile armies were cut to pieces or driven from our shores; the horrible noise of war was heard no more, and that awful calm ensued which succeeds the devastation of the tempest.

I will not fatigue my readers with a minute detail of the events which were to follow. He was dispatched as envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary to the court of St. James, where was assembled a Congress of Ambassadors from all nations. He was there looked upon, even by his late enemies, as a kind of superior being, and obtained such influence among the ambassadors that he not only settled the peace of his own country on a most admirable basis, but adjusted the balance of power all over the world. He insisted in particular that the island of Gibraltar should be ceded to the Spaniards, and the king of Great Britain, tho' it was sorely against his inclination, was obliged to acquiesce.

Having settled the peace of mankind, he resolved to travel, in which delightful recreation and admirable means of improvement in knowledge, he spent five years. Wherever he went he was such

an object of curiosity, and was received, with such shouts and huzzas, that he was compelled to travel in disguise, lest he might be stunned with noise and stifled for the want of air. At the end of five years he returned to America, and landed at New-York.

Staten Island, Governor's Island, Bedloe's, Gibbet and Ellis's islands, Brooklyn heights, and more than all, the Battery, were so covered with people that one might have walked for hours on their heads, and their shout was like the roar of the ocean in a storm, on Rockaway beach,

But not to fatigue my readers, I hasten to conclude this history of wonders, by relating that he was chosen President of the United States by the unanimous voice of the people, and that he held the chief magistracy twelve years; a period which was afterwards to be mentioned in history by the name of "THE GOLDEN AGE OF COLUMBIA."

At the end of that term, notwithstanding the earnest solicitations of his countrymen for his continuance in office, he resigned his public trust, and resolved to spend the evening of his days in peaceful retirement.

The young gentleman was too much delighted with the promises of Anticipation, to think of look-

ing in the glass of Experience, but giving a dollar to the flattering fortune teller, by way of extra-compensation, he departed, clapping his hands and exhibiting the utmost extravagance of joy.

He was succeeded by two young ladies, who have long aspired to the title of the heart-breakers. One possessed an airy and sylph like form, the other was blest with more substantial dimensions. I was glad to see them approach, for I was anxious to discover the cause which could have induced them to reject so many enviable offers, and send gloom and disappointment into so many families. To conceal nothing from my readers, I must inform them that they boasted not merely the ruddy hue of the cheek or the lily-like softness and whiteness of the skin. Though they were both of them handsome, they had charms more solid and permanent than beauty, and the happy lords of their love might not only hope to be kissed to their rest, but to sleep in a spacious apartment and to ride in a gilded coach.

The sylph came first, and the wizard glass of Anticipation exhibited the Theatre and Assembly. At the Theatre there was a universal stir when she appeared, like that caused by the entrance of a naval or military chief. She rivetted all eyes, and

the players complained that the performance was less attended to, than the smiles of the heart-breaker.

At the Assembly the gentlemen forgot the figure from the moment she entered the room, and when addressed by their partners, answered as though they had been playing at cross-questions. "Pray" said a lady "do you not think the weather fine?" "Exquisitely beautiful, upon my honor." "How do you like the figure?" said another. "Indiscribably elegant, by Heaven she's a Goddess!"

Happy was the youth who could engage her hand in the dance. Those who were deprived of this honor, waited near, to solicit the pleasure of moving her fan, and such as were denied both these privileges, stood ready, hoping that she would drop her handkerchief or complain of thirst, and call for lemonade.

Of the slaves of her charms, not many were bold enough to disclose their passion. There were however a few gallant youths of our city, with here and there a London Cockney, a Frenchman and a Foreign Agent, who were not to be daunted. But they never failed to repent their presumption. Month after month added to the list of rejected lovers.

Not to fatigue my readers with too long a description, I will just inform them, that after having tyrannized over the youth of our city for about four years, she was at last married to one of the Bourbon family, and that not only the Prime Minister of Louis XVIII. but all the Princes of the blood attended the wedding.

The fortune of the other heart-breaker was not materially different, except that she was eventually married to a Scotch lord, and the ceremony of throwing the stocking was performed as in the good old times of the martyred Mary.

They were succeeded by a troop of young ladies, who it seemed had been unsuccessful in their respective attacks on the hearts of certain young gentlemen, to every one whom the fortune-teller promised speedy victory by a *coup-de-main*. One carried her lover by a beautiful set of ivory teeth—manufactured by Doctor Parkhurst; another by long flowing and curling ringlets—from the shop of Hassy; another by a most killing complexion—imported from France; and one whose spark had been uncommonly obstinate and mulish, knocked him down—with a pair of Bishops. A fifth stood before the glass in all the pride of her charms, when the witch whispered he to show a little more of her

bosom. The effect was instantaneous, and brought her lover at her feet.

In some future number, perhaps I may give my readers a further account of what I saw in the enchanted mirrors.